# Special Step-Up Instrument Rental & Sales Event!!!

Helping students advance from their student instrument to an intermediate or professional level instrument isn't just good for our business, it's the right thing to do for the musicians in our area!

A well-conceived, carefully planned approach – with total attention to detail will result in a successful promotion. This is a detailed outline of how to run a successful step-up promotion.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Step-Up Instrument Sales Program is to promote individual excellence in student musicians by equipping them with an instrument that is better suited to their playing ability.

## Overall Advantages

- **You will act as a consultative-partner with the director to improve the quality of his/her instrumental music program.**

That is your primary task as an Educational Representative. Once you view your job in that light, you have taken the initial step to further position Zeswitz Music as a valuable resource. This moves the focus from how much business you gain to how much service you offer.

- **This is yet another important and beneficial service offered by Zeswitz Music.**

Sell this promotion as a service to the music program – not as a means for you to sell more. You are helping to fill an important need – not creating one.

- **This approach allows the director is able to give better guidance to students and parents.**

Most directors want to be involved in the "step-up process" for his/her students. This type of approach allows them to be involved — but you are in control.

- **This approach also allows for a more efficient use of directors' time.**

This program allows directors can to give overall direction to students, without the need to counsel students one at a time. Of course, directors may decide to work one-on-one with their students. This process should become an integral part of the band or orchestra's yearly activities.

- **Saves parents' time; provides them with better guidance; gives them confidence.**

Parents aren't left on their own to "shop around". Most have little or no knowledge of musical instrument quality: which brands and models offer the most advantages; the level of instrument they should be looking for to match the playing ability and interest level of their child. They need, desire, and deserve guidance. This program provides that.

- **Promotes a larger number of students to step-up.**

In-school step-up promotions create an atmosphere in which getting a step-up instrument is “the cool thing to do.” After the process has become established as an ongoing, yearly activity, students will look forward to the opportunity. As more students acquire a step-up instrument, more will want to. After the promotion is established as a yearly activity for the program, you can realistically expect the following percentage of students in the ensemble to be playing a step-up instrument:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| First Year | 10% | Third Year | 30% |
| Second Year | 20% | Fourth Year | 40% |

- **Provides more efficient use of our time; reduces the average cost of sale; reduces overhead.**

Group selling spreads effort, time and expense over many sales.

## Benefits of Step-Ups

This program is a WIN – WIN – WIN - WIN for directors, students and parents — and us. Use these selling points when presenting the program’s advantages to your directors.

**For directors and their programs**

- Better sounding ensemble.
- Improved individual excellence = improved ensemble
- Intonation
- Tone quality
- Balance and blend
- Improved technique
- Improved performances.
- Better Contest/Festival ratings.
- Improved student morale and attitude.
- Improves retention of students
- Increases prestige of the ensemble
- Greater peer recognition

**For students**

- Self improvement
- Advancement in skill level
- More pride in self and ensemble
- Improved attitude
- Encourages practice
- Less likely to drop out

**For parents**

- Investment in child’s music education.
- Saves time; provides better guidance
- Encourages student to stay involved in music.
- Encourages success. Parents will encourage child to practice.
- Increases parental involvement and interest in program.
- They appreciate director’s demand for better musicianship.
- High quality – value investment.
- Never needs replacing.
- Less service – maintenance problems

**For Zeswitz Music**

- Additional sales
- Closer involvement in music programs.  Means of access to rental program
- The place to shop for quality
- More efficient use of Educational Representatives time
- Competitive edge
- Keeps out competition

# STEP ONE

## Who Are We Going to Approach?

The very first thing that needs to be decided is: which schools and directors are we going to approach to be part of this event? The best place to start is with the “low hanging fruit.” These are the schools with which we already have a solid relationship with the director. These directors will be more open to the strategies that we will implement in this program, because we have already earned their trust as a partner. This step-up program will only serve to improve upon our solid relationship.

## Who Do You Have To Sell First?

Your first selling job is with the band director.  But, you will only have to sell him or her one time. After once experiencing this promotion – with all of its benefits for students, parents and the instrumental music program – the director will be asking you first about scheduling it next year.

Initially, however, you may have to do some selling.  Explain all of the benefits this program will offer to all concerned.  Make sure the director understands the important role he plays in the process and that this program puts him in control of the step-up process.

Gaining director support and buy-in is the key to success.  If the director is ambivalent, so also will be his students.  However, if the director gets excited about having a higher percentage of students playing better instruments, success will be imminent.

A helpful technique is to introduce the director to a new model of whatever his/her instrument is. For instance, if the director is a trumpet player take in a model he may not be familiar with (preferably a model we want to promote) to try.  Talk about the features and benefits.  Ask, “How would you like your students to be playing an instrument like this?”  Let that discussion lead into an explanation of how our step-up program works.

Our prices may be an issue.  There may a perception with some directors that our prices are too high.  If so, you will have to make them aware that our prices are very competitive.  Perhaps not the cheapest, but very competitive.  They must understand the value we offer to them and their students.

Consumers want three things: the highest quality, the lowest price, and the best service.  In reality they can have only two of those.  The highest quality and best service comes with an associated cost.  The highest quality and lowest price results in little or no service (i.e. mail order catalogues).  The lowest price and the best service must compromise the quality of the product.

What consumers really want is value.  A fair price for a quality product with excellent service equals the best value.

## What is your market?

This is easy.  Your market is every single program you call on – large or small, successful or unsuccessful, whether you do the beginner program or not. As mentioned above, if this is your first time with this type of promotion, start with schools where you are ensured some measure of success. Large, successful programs will have lots of "ready to go" prospects, while smaller music programs may be in even greater need of your help. This is one important way you can be of service.

It is a mistake to overlook those programs where we don't handle the beginner rental program. Getting involved with a step-up programs may open doors for more business in other areas, such as the beginner rental program.

### How many schools should we start with?

The amount of accounts that you help with this step-up promotion is limited only by the amount of time that you can dedicate to its success. For reps doing this for the first time, I would recommend no more than 3-5 schools. If each of these schools generates 3-5 steo-up sales, that's a good return on your investment.

# STEP TWO

## The Plan

The following is a step-by-step description of how an in-school step-up program works.  This plan works, and it has been proven to do so over many years in hundreds of instrumental music programs.  It is simple and effective.  But success will require time, effort and good planning. Here are the steps or stages this plan requires:

1. Planning
2. Pre-Selling Students
3. Try-Out Day
4. Parent Meeting
5. Follow-Up

### Planning

A well-conceived, carefully planned approach – with total attention to detail – will result in success.  After you have sold the director, these are the decisions that must be made:

**Set a date range for the event.**  The prime times of the year are October – early December (avoid getting too close to the holiday season) and January – March.  Be careful to avoid other potential school and community conflicts.

**Set a date and time for the step-up event,** no more than a week or two later than your in-school presentations.  Don't wait too long; it is imperative to catch students at the peak of their enthusiasm for a new step-up instrument.

**Determine which grade levels to target.** This decision is somewhat a matter of philosophy. What is the purpose of this program? Is the goal only self-serving? If so, this will not be an on-going, successful endeavor. Your goal should be to provide a much-needed service; to fill an existing need — not to create an artificial one.

- All students will benefit from having a step-up instrument. But, realistically, not all students really need a step-up instrument. For several, the instrument with which they began is all they will ever need.
- However, many students outgrow the capabilities of their beginner instrument. To ensure continued progress, these students legitimately need a better-quality instrument. Depending on the original quality and condition of the beginner instrument, the need for a better one does not become evident until the latter grades of middle school. Unless, of course, the student started on a piece of junk (and many do).
- Therefore, the prime grades to target are high school and the grade that immediately precedes high school. Targeting the latter grade will help ensure more students will make the transition from middle to high school.
- One other thought – don't paint yourself into a corner by portraying the beginner rental instrument as one that will last through high school. It may or may not.

**Pitch the director.** Now is the time to have a lengthy sit-down with the director at the target school. Make an appointment in advance so that you have time to have a long enough conversation to get the job done. Be prepared to take notes, and dive in:

- Chat about step-up instruments in general, and how they are better than student instruments. Bring along a sample to discuss. In our case, bringing an example of a Buffet instrument (or two) that is in the plan is an excellent idea.
- Discuss the features of the instrument, and at some point, ask some form of the following question: "Would you like more of your students to be playing an instrument like this?" Let the director answer, and move the conversation forward.
- Next, ask the director which students really "deserve" a professional instrument. The director already knows which 5-10 students in his classes are struggling because of their instruments. "Wouldn't it be great if these students can try these instruments in class to get an idea of how they will play?"
- Describe our plan in simple terms:
    - EdRep brings instruments to class
    - EdRep describes to students the differences between student and professional instruments
    - Using the list of "deserving students" provided by the director, the step ups are distributed to students at the beginning of rehearsal
    - Students play instruments
    - Fill out student information cards
    - EdRep collects instruments

**Your Director is fully on board now. Time for the close:**

- Select a class and a date for the presentation
- Have the director make a list of recommended students. Have the director make a list of all the students he would recommend for a better instrument. He should be selective (10% - 20% of students). Again, the purpose is to fill a real need, not create an artificial

one. The key to the success of this program is to establish prestige – make it an honor for the student that the director would make such a recommendation.

- Determine the brand and models of instruments that will be used. Guide the director to select the products we prefer to sell. Always include our sheltered and proprietary models. Select one or two step-up models along with one advanced model. Too many choices will only be confusing.
- Use the Step-Up Program Planning form to record the Try-Out and In-store Parent Meeting dates, as well as the selection of brands and models.
- Prepare the parent meeting letter/flyer with the director.
    - The wording is crucial. Don't allow the director to write it. Use our sample
    - It will be from the director, not our company. Be sure the director has approved the content.

**Finally, make sure that the director knows that they are invited to the step-up sales event. In fact, we WANT them there! Having the director on site, personally guiding students towards step-up instruments is worth its weight in silver-plated brass!**

### Pre-Sell Students

This is the responsibility of you and the director. How well you accomplish this job will determine the success of the program. If the director is enthusiastic and can transfer that enthusiasm to his students – success is eminent. Encourage and remind him often. His job is to:

- Inform students generally of the planned step-up program — its purpose and how it will work.
- Meet with the recommended students individually or as a group. Explain why they are recommended; build excitement and pride. This is the targeted group, but all students should be exposed to the program and no student should be denied. This may be all that a weaker student needs to be inspired.
- Continue to remind students of the tryout date — continue to build excitement. This entire program should be characterized to the students as an important, annual event in the life of the music program.

# STEP THREE

## Try-Out Day IN THE BANDROOM

This is the big day. Depending on which grade levels have been selected for participation, you may have only one class to make a presentation to, or several.

Arrive early – be prepared. Assemble and display the instruments before class starts. *Ideally, the instruments should be displayed on a table with a Zeswitz Music tablecloth (think PMEA), out of their cases and on instrument stands.*

When class begins, the director should briefly explain today's procedures. You will have to "coach" him/her on what to say.

- Explain the importance of being recommended for progression to a better instrument.
- State that no student who is interested will be discouraged.

- Explain that arrangements have been made with our company to conduct this special step-up program for his/her students.
- Introduce you.

Now it's your turn. Also be brief – you have a lot to accomplish in a short time. But there are some important points to make with the students. This whole speech should take no more than 5 minutes.

- Why step up? Explain why some students need to consider obtaining a better instrument; why they outgrow the capabilities of student-line instruments.
- What makes a step-up instrument better? Better materials, more attention to construction detail (more handwork, less mass production) and superior design.
- Describe the advantages of step-ups offer over student-line instruments (better tone quality, intonation, flexibility, resonance, responsiveness)
- Give a brief description of the features of the selected models. (Example: flute – open holes, low B foot; clarinet – grenadilla wood; trombone – F attachment).
- Explain today's procedure and what the follow-up will be (Parent Meeting date and time). Request that students fill out whatever version of student info card you have selected.
- Answer questions – except price! Just don't discuss it. Tell the students that there are many purchase options available and that you will discuss these with their parents. If you give out prices, they may decide it is too expensive — or assume their parents will not be interested. It may even encourage cross-shopping.

Next, pass out the instruments to the students that the director recommends. Of course, we will allow all interested students to take turns playing them during the regular rehearsal, using their own mouthpiece. The director, at various points during the rehearsal, should remind the students to switch instruments

While the students are rehearsing, (and certainly before class ends), pass out the parent meeting letter/flyer and have interested students fill out the Student Information Card. Make sure to Save enough time to do this. Be available at the end of class to answer individual questions or allow students who are able to stay afterward to continue to try the instruments.

# STEP FOUR – FOLLOWING UP…

## Prior To the Sales Event

Immediately following the try-out date, mail the parent letter signed by the director. You must have the letter produced and signed prior to the try-out date. Three days later send a postcard reminding parents that the special (school name) step-up night is (date of meeting).

Also immediately following the meeting, send the same information via email to all of the email addresses that you have collected. If you have a Marketing feature in your POS or CRM system, load this data asap and have the machine work its magic. Time is of the essence here, as there is (hopefully) a short window between the classroom event and the sales event.

After you have mailed these items, give the leads to the store manager. At this time, the store staff will place a phone call to all of the leads that you generated, and start to set appointments.

The director should remind students during class that they should attend the step-up meeting, and should encourage, individually, the selected students to attend the meeting.

# STEP FIVE – AT THE EVENT…

**On the day/evening of the event arrive early.** Clean and polish the instruments and set up an attractive display.

**Private areas or studios needs to be set up** so that you can speak privately with individual families, and so that the students have a place to try out the instrument.

**The director's role – if present - is to greet parents and students**.

- Congratulate each parent on his or her child's progress.
- Explain why a better instrument will benefit the student.
- The director must NOT — under ANY circumstances — discuss price.
- He/she should encourage parents to meet with you to learn about pricing and purchase options.
- Guidance on the choice of the step-up or advanced model is proper.

Again, you will need to "coach" the director on what to do and say.

## As the EdRep, you have several responsibilities:

**Work with each family separately** — never more than one at a time. They will very likely talk each other out of making a decision if you try to handle more than one family at a time.

- Build trust; establish rapport; be open and friendly
- Congratulate the student on his or her progress.
- Explain the purpose of the meeting.
- Reaffirm the need of a step-up instrument for qualified students, but not for all students. This appeals to the pride of both parents and students (of course, my child is deserving). This also validates your sincerity to the parents (you are not taking the position that every student should buy a step-up instrument). It also puts you on the parent's side – not the student's side.
- You have an obligation to counsel parents and students, as honestly as possible, about the decision to purchase a better instrument.
- Discuss the generalities of why step-up instruments are different from the student line (design, workmanship, detail, materials, etc.).

**Sell your product; yourself; your company.**

- Explain the differences in the step-up and advanced models. Refer to them as the Basic Professional and Professional Instruments. Few parents can see the need for their child to own a "professional" instrument. Although, if they are golfers, they will understand wanting to own the very best clubs they can afford — even brands used by their favorite professional, if possible.
- Sell the advantages of the advanced model (holds its value). Don't assume it is out of their price range. You can always sell down to the step-up model.

- Help the student zero in on his or her choice. Again, offer your honest, professional counsel. Remember the advantages to parents, students and our company of our proprietary and sheltered models.

**Trade-ins.** Explain your trade in policy here. Their present instrument should be kept for use in marching band or privately sold (customer can sell it for more than we could allow on trade).

**Rental credit.**

- Explain your policies on rental credit here.

**Handling pricing pressure**

If the customer presses you on price (indicates they can purchase by mail or over the internet for less), promote doubt in the competitor.

- We are an authorized dealer for this brand of instrument. The "out of state" dealer may not be.
- Only an authorized dealer who purchased the instrument originally from the manufacturer can process factory warranties. Instruments are not like automobiles in that regard. If there is a warranty problem our policy is to simply replace it our customer and then deal with the warranty problem ourselves. That way, you don't have to wait months for the problem to be resolved.
- Our instrument will include the original mouthpiece furnished by the manufacturer – not a cheap substitute. Our instrument will come in the manufacturer's original case – not a cheap substitute.
- We do not sell manufacturers' "seconds".

Selling our proprietary and sheltered products will help avoid some price shopping.

**Close the sale**

- Be straightforward and confident. Expect their business – you deserve it!
- After you have positioned the customer on the brand and model, ask the closing question. "Do you want to go ahead and set this up?" Then shut up! Remember – the first person to speak gets to keep the merchandise.
- Don't be afraid to sell and ask the customer to buy – but in this setting, don't pressure. You might make the sale but lose credibility.
- Complete the sale.
- If the parent is still undecided, get a follow up position.
    - "When might you decide?
    - "When could I call you?"
- Leave them information on how they can contact you, or the nearest store.

## Follow-Up

If you and the director did a good job in organizing, planning and carrying out the program, the results of the parent meeting will probably be very gratifying. Over the years, as you repeat this promotion and everyone becomes comfortable with it, the ratio of sales will continue to improve. On average, of those who attend the first meeting, one-third will probably make a purchase. But

that's not the end of it.  With a good follow-up, additional sales will mature over the next few weeks and months

The director's responsibility in the follow-up is to maintain positive communications with parents who did not purchase and recognize and congratulate the students who did.

Using the Student Information Forms:

- Go through with the director and pull out the forms for students who attended the meeting.
- A personalized follow-up letter should be mailed to all who attended but did not purchase; thanking them for attending; offer to assist them in the future.
- Within 30 days, contact these people by phone.

## Other Step-Up Promotions

- In-school demo with individual follow-up by phone.
- In-school demo with "Parent Night" at the school.  Promote it as the special night for X school. Having the event at the school will give you additional credibility.
- In-school demo prior to holidays and pass out flyers to the students yourself.
- Individual leads provided by the director.  Ask each of your directors for the names of 5 students who need a better instrument.  If you are calling on 40 directors, that equals 200 prospects.
- Display step-ups at district/county/state clinics (during the clinic for students to try out during breaks and at the concert).  Try to get a mailing list of all students participating in the clinic.  Mail a letter of congratulation to parents on their child being selected and provide information about step-ups.